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ABSTRACT

The Michigan English Language Arts Framework (MELAF) offers an illustrative case of top-down and bottom-up confluences in curriculum policymaking. In several distinct ways, state policy met local initiatives to create dynamic partnerships to spread change. State systematic reformers looked to the grass roots for ideas and percolating initiatives. Locals partnered with state reformers to galvanize and legitimize changes that had been underway before the newest wave of state policy came along. These top-down and bottom-up intersections reveal new ways to think about some of the possibilities of systemic reform. In the MELAF project, top and bottom joined in three arenas: (1) state reformers called on grass roots educators to write content standards in English language arts; (2) state reformers launched a "demonstration project" to bring together four local districts to showcase the state standards at the grass-roots level; and (3) teachers from the four demonstration districts created ways to advocate for state policy. The MELAF Project began in 1993 with a Goals 2000 grant to the Michigan Department of Education and the University of Michigan. In addition to providing intensive work with a relatively small group of teachers and districts, the MELAF Project worked in wider arenas as well. The standards were to undergird the state's assessment, and in Michigan, as elsewhere, state tests have exerted significant pressure on districts who in turn exert pressure on principals and teachers. MELAF was both a formal state policy emanating from the top of the system, and an effort to consolidate and accelerate changes percolating at the grass roots level. (RS)

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TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP: TEACHERS AS POLICY ADVOCATES IN THE MICHIGAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS FRAMEWORKS PROJECT

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"It's easier to move a cemetery than to change curriculums" a teacher recently explained in an interview. Her vivid turn of phrase certainly has ample support in the research literature. Curriculum policy has yet to produce wide-spread, lasting change in teaching practice; research has offered a host of compelling reasons why this might be so. Barriers due to the organizational structure of schooling (Kirst & Meister, 1985; Tyack, Kirst, & Hansot, 1980; Tyack & Tobin, 1994); barriers created by the conservatism and isolation of teachers (Lortie, 1975); and barriers arising from the complex demands of new visions of curriculum (Cohen, 1989) all combine to mitigate, if not fully defeat, large-scale curriculum change.

One central reason why curriculum reforms fail to penetrate lies in the nature of the educational system itself. The educational system is decentralized and loosely coupled (Cohen, 1982,1995; Shulman, 1983) which is to say, change introduced at any level of the educational system will not makes its way into other levels in any neat or sequentially predictable fashion. Many have noted that changes introduced at the top of the system, at the state level for example, are likely to become diffused, circumvented, or unevenly implemented at the bottom of the system, in schools and classrooms (Berman, 1978; McLaughlin, 1976, 1987). The legacy of local control, and the practical reality of local discretion, provide considerable opportunities for variability in any system-wide planned curriculum change.

And locals are often busy with their own formal and informal curricular changes. Policymaking, as Spillane and Cohen (1993) have pointed out, is not a zero-sum game. State level policymaking may increase and compound local responses. Further, local activity may proceed according to its own varying pressures and context-specific conditions. The educational arena is full of reform ideas -- some sponsored by the state, others sponsored by professional organizations, publishers, consultants, and educational researchers. The marketplace of reform ideas is active, crowded, polyvocal. Local policymakers along with teachers as "independent artisans" (Huberman, 1993) may initiate curriculum changes quite distinct from the policy messages emanating from other arenas in the system.

Not only is the system loosely coupled, it is, according to analysts like Fullan (1993), essentially complex. The range of actors, the instability of conditions, and the transitory shifts of personnel and decision-making all add to the variability within the system. Fullan argues that planned change is a chimera; "rational planning" is a human, albeit false hope. Fullan draws heavily from chaos theories of change, and those analysts like Senge (1990) who view systemic complexity as a quintessential given. Current educational policymaking does not (yet?) assume that rational change is fully self-defeating, even though the system's dynamism and unpredictability are confounding and well documented.

All of which is to say something unsurprising: top-down curriculum change has proved to be complex and problematic. Actors at the local level turn out to be powerful players. But if top-down change rarely proceeds as hoped, local control has its limitations too. Particularly with regards to equity, locals have not proven able to provide all students with equal educational opportunity. Further, local change remains, by definition, local. Circumscribed by the same complex systemic constraints, local change does not travel with any rationalized coherence to other levels of the system.

Our current reform climate reveals several interesting top-down and bottom-up confluences and conflicts. On the one hand, several researchers have noted a steady increase in federal and state efforts to exert influence over curriculum at the top of the system (Firestone, 1990; Lee, 1997). With the convening of the National Educational Goals panel in 1989, the federal government and the states have taken on an expanded role in curriculum policymaking. Focusing on educational outputs rather than categorical inputs, federal and state departments of education have become increasingly involved in articulating educational goals, curriculum standards and frameworks (Ravitch, 1995).

On the other hand, governance reforms in the 1980s stressed the value of local decision making. Under the broad umbrella of "site-based management," "total quality education," "strategic planning," and "decentralized decision-making," educational reform was to occur at the ground level. Those closest to the local context should be charged with making decisions about school programand locally developed outcomes. Creating inclusive, participatory structures for decision-making, these decentralized approaches vested considerable faith in creating large scale educational success one site at a time.

Hence we are at an interesting crossroads. Fullan (1993) stipulates that "neither centralization nor decentralization works" while adding "both top-down and bottom up strategies are necessary," (p. 22) Similarly, Darling Hammond (1993) stipulates that we need top down support for bottom up change. Shulman (1983) argues our loosely coupled system is quite "adaptive," an asset rather than a liability in creating conditions for change. But what does an adaptive system look like in light of a particular policy? What does it look like to do"both"?

The Michigan English Language Arts Framework Project (MELAF) offers an illustrative case of top-down and bottom up confluences in curriculum policymaking. In several distinct ways, state policy met local initiatives to create dynamic partnerships to spread change. State systemic reformers looked to the grass roots for ideas and percolating initiatives. Locals partnered with state reformers to galvanize and legitimize changes that had been underway before the newest wave of state policy came along. These top-down and bottom-up intersections reveal new ways to think about some of the possibilities of systemic reform.

In the MELAF project, top and bottom conjoined in three arenas. State reformers called on grass roots educators to write content standards in English language arts. State reformers launched a "demonstration project" to bring together four local districts to showcase the state standards at the grass-roots level. In each of the four districts, literacy reform had been underway prior to the state policy, but formal participation in the Demonstration Project served to accelerate and consolidate local changes. Lastly, and most surprisingly, teachers from the four demonstration districts created ways to advocate for state policy. They reached out to state and local audiences to lobby for the state-levels reforms. They fostered local activity at the bottom to spread literacy reforms to wider audiences. In all three related instances, Michigan literacy reform proceeded from strategic intersections of top-down and bottom-up change.

Top-down and bottom -up in the development of content standards

The MELAF project began in 1993 with a Goals 2000 grant to the Michigan Department of Education and the University of Michigan (See Appendix 1 for a description of the data collection and method our research on MELAF). By the late 1980s, Bush administration officials had become largely dissatisfied with national subject-matter goals projects, and Goals 2000 became more of a federal than

a national initiative (Cookson, 1995; Stevenson, 1995). Goals 2000 money would flow to states so that they could write their own state-level content standards (Diegmueller, 1995). In Michigan, state staffers wanted to use MELAF to create a language arts curriculum which, when joined with efforts in mathematics, science, and social studies, would become the state's academic core curriculum. MELAF was viewed by the (then) state superintendent, Robert Schiller, as part of systemic reform:

> MELAF...will afford us the opportunity and resources to unify an innovative curriculum framework which integrates ...English language arts...instruction and assessment, and informs teacher preservice and in-service. (Schiller: Memo to Anderson, March 31, 1994).

The state core curriculum would be sent out to each of the state's 567 school districts and by law (Public Acts 335 and 336), they would adopt the state curriculum standards or re-tool the "recommended" state standards if they wished. However, local discretion was distinctly constrained: the state standards were to be the basis of revised state assessments in science, reading, math and writing, which were given at select elementary grade levels. The state's high school proficiency exam, the basis for an "endorsed" diploma, would also be revised to reflect the new state standards. The state did not promulgate a highly detailed blueprint for local curriculum, but it did require locals to respond to the state systemic reform by adopting a curriculum that would be tested by the state.

Hence MELAF was a classic systemic approach initiated at the top of the system, by the state, and funded at even higher levels of the system, by the federal government. But as the reform initiative took shape, it consolidated ideas and initiatives at the bottom in several ways. As a systemic initiative, it carved up its work to address several important arenas within the educational system-- assessment, teacher education, and curriculum -- but it did so by calling on educational players at the grass-roots level. Monitored by a management team, the MELAF project assembled 200 participants from across the state who were divided into working groups such as an Equity Panel, a Teacher Education Task Force, Grade Level Task Forces, a joint Subject Matter Steering Committee, and a Demonstration Project, among other sub-initiatives.

The state stipulated that content standards were to be the lead policy instrument, but they did not specify exactly what the standards should consist of. The state was interested in something "innovative" and they did *not* call for a strong emphasis on basic skills (as was more typical during the 1980s state reforms across the Southeast, for example). But neither did they substantially flesh

out what kind of standards they had in mind. Hence, the MELAF project was charged with determining the content of the standards. During its first funded year, the MELAF project assembled task forces to write integrated content standards in English language arts. These task forces were comprised of classroom teachers, curriculum specialists from local school districts and intermediate School Districts, and university-based teacher educators. The MELAF management team called on teachers they knew who were interested in and committed to progressive, integrated conceptions of literacy. Attempting to develop a more participatory approach to policymaking, rather than handing down a writ from on high, MELAF project leaders assembled a large, but not random, group of educators.

The writing began in 1993 and continued with field review and standards' re-drafting through 1995. Organized into Grade Level Task Forces, approximately 50 MELAF teachers, administrators, language arts professionals, and researchers generated their vision of standards for language arts. Though the standards themselves are succinct, they encapsulate a host of meanings, research findings, educational values, and stances that bind together MELAF advocates. The MELAF standards drew on ideas that had been gaining prominence in the English language arts professional organizations long before 1990s standards movement.

The 10 standards finally accepted by the Michigan State Board of Education are provided in Appendix 2. The standards are complex and multi-faceted, but many teachers referred to them in short-hand as "best practice." As one teacher in this study explained, "best practice is the idea that real readers read and real writers write." Despite its seeming simplicity, this view of literacy represents a marked departure from modal classroom instruction where students often do little extended writing and read short selections from textbooks. The Michigan standards, on the other hand, promote a view of literacy that stresses students' active use of language in authentic contexts. They promote an *integrated* view of language arts where reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing are centrally related to each other. All the standards are predicated on the constructivist dictum that meaning is created through using language, by drawing on individual frames of reference, socio-cultural lenses, prior knowledge of language conventions, and individual dispositions. The standards use verbs that stress active uses of literacy rather than isolated mastery of sequential sub-skills. Traditional school skills are not discounted, but the standards suggest a holistic

approach in which students learn skills in the context of meaningful engagement with literature, writing, inquiry, and text-rich experiences. Students will learn language by doing language. The standards never say "students should know...." They say, "students should know how to....." They also contain a strong element of respect for cultural diversity and multicultural literacy and they stress literacy as a vehicle for personal meaning.

The Michigan English language arts standards express complex ideas about literacy, and this brief gloss does not do them justice. What is most salient to this paper, however, is not the specific vision of literacy they endorsed, but rather that the ideas that under-girded the standards well-predated the state reform. The standards bear a strong resemblance to ideas found in the Writing Project approaches to writing, the whole language movement, constructivism, and thematic approaches to teaching. They suggest pedagogies such as writers workshop, readers workshop, thematic instruction, and reader response approaches. These ideas had been gaining advocates throughout the 1970s and '80s; several ideas can be traced back even further to progressive ideas described by Dewey (1902/1964) and in Kilpatrick's Project Method.

The Michigan English language arts standards drew on streams of literacy reform that had long and longer roots in progressive educational practice. Michigan's standards actually pre-dated the National Standards in English language arts developed by a joint partnership of the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association (1996). Yet Michigan's standards bear a strong family resemblance to those standards. The similar vision expressed in the two documents represent a significant degree of consensus within the language arts establishment. I do not suggest that there is unilateral agreement about "best practice," within the larger pool of teachers in the U.S. nor within the citizenry. Certainly the rancorous debates about whole language and phonics instruction (Lemann, 1997) belie significant disagreement about educational values and pedagogy. But within the national subject matter organizations, universities, educational publishers such as Heinemann, and the Writing Project movement (Goldberg, 1998), there is a related set of ideas that have held considerable sway. The MELAF project assembled a group of educators who jointly hashed out a progressive set of literacy standards that broadly reflected those ideas.

Seeking to develop curriculum frameworks from the ground up, with inclusive participation and grass-roots input, is not a phenomenon unique to Michigan. Notions of "buy in" and

"ownership" as a precondition to implementation have been in place in many sites and states. What makes the MELAF project more interesting is that the top-down and bottom up intersections occurred in other arenas besides the development of the state standards. Other interesting intersections occurred in what MELAF project leaders created as the "Demonstration Project" component of their reform.

Top-down and bottom-up in The Demonstration Project

Once the content standards had been drafted, the MELAF project began work on the Demonstration Project in 1994. This initiative included four school districts where the English language arts standards could be "demonstrated" and showcased. The content standards themselves consisted of words on the page, but in the demonstration districts, teachers could show what the standards could look like in practice at the grass roots level. Providing tangible examples and teacher expertise, these districts were intended to demonstrate standards-based change to a wider state audience.

One of the members of MELAF's management team, Sarah Plant, had strong ideas about what it would take to showcase the state content standards. She felt that "paper" reforms, such as the content standards, would not, by themselves, guide change. Describing her work as a consultant with Elmore Schools, an Intermediate School District, she recalled a time several years prior when she had helped a group of district teachers write a curriculum. Though the paper curriculum was exemplary, the district did not invest resources in professional development to enact it.

> This curriculum won an NCTE award for being you know, an outstanding curriculum, but it never moved to the enacted curriculum point, and that just, I couldn't believe that these teachers had poured their heart and souls into this work, believing that the district was going to come through with the professional development that would connect with it, and it didn't happen. And it was like, I'll never do this again. I'll never be a party to this kind of betrayal of teachers. Professional development *always* gets left out in these districts, in these curriculum conversations. And that was one of the things I was terribly concerned about in the MELAF project too, that you know, I remember saying at a very early meeting of this, "If this ends up being more paper from the state, I don't want to be a part of it. I really don't

want to have anything to do with it. Only if it comes alive for teachers in districts, then I can see a reason to do it, but otherwise, forget it."

Under her leadership, the Demonstration Project included approximately 48 participants, mostly teachers, with 12 coming from each of four designated school districts. Teachers were clustered by school, with a few selected from one elementary, middle and high school in each district. Only two of the Demonstration site participants had been involved in the Grade Level Task Forces that wrote the content standards. Each of the four districts, however, had exhibited certain kinds of literacy reform initiatives prior to their involvement with the MELAF project in 1994. This prior involvement was a significant condition of their selection as "demonstration sites." After all, MELAF project leaders reasoned, if these districts were going to be able to "demonstrate" best practice in language arts within a relatively short time span, it made sense to choose districts that were hospitable to the state standards and committed to on-going change. The four districts varied by size, racial composition, and along urban/suburban/rural lines, but all four districts had prior relationships with project leaders and with language arts reforms (see Appendix 3 for specific demographic data on all four districts).

Bottom-up change in The Demonstration Districts

In the smallest district, Idlewilde, literacy reform had begun when a few teachers shifted to a "workshop" approach to reading and writing instruction and had incorporated "directed independent reading and writing" into their practice. They began to share these changes with their principals and with the superintendent, himself a former English teacher. Impressed with what he was seeing, the district superintendent hired an English professor, Jack Hooper, from a local college to provide a summer institute on the writing process which a number of district teachers participated in. Hooper offered summer workshops, and he also made himself available to visit classrooms and teach mini lessons (Honchell, 1995). According to the superintendent,

> we began to see the kind of results they were getting with student writing and it kind of mushroomed, and so prior to MELAF we already had a pretty good core group of people who were doing reading and writing workshop kinds of activity in their classrooms. And it was about a year before MELAF that we formed a group that came together monthly to talk

about integrated language arts instruction. And we did some reading together and some studying together.

That group, the Language Arts Steering Committee, began in 1993-94, and eventually decided to write a professional development grant to the state to fund continued summer institutes run by Jack Hooper. Though the grant wasn't funded, the proposal caught the attention of the language arts coordinator at the State Department of Education who was involved with MELAF. Furthermore, Jack Hooper was married to one of the MELAF project leaders, Sarah Plant, and she suggested that he would be an asset to the Demonstration Project. Given Hooper's knowledge of Idlewilde and the commitment to language arts reform underway there, he suggested that Idlewilde might be a demonstration candidate.

In another demonstration district, Norris, one language arts teacher had become very involved with the whole language movement at the national level, cultivating a relationship with Ken and Yetta Goodman. At the district central office, they had also begun a partnership with a language arts Framework project run by the Michigan State University's Educational Extension Service in partnership with the Educational Development Center in Massachusetts and the now-defunct Michigan Partnership for New Education. The Frameworks project, occurring in the 1980s and early 1990s, outlined a vision of literacy reform that was generally consonant with what would become the state core curriculum. And during this time, the Norris district began to send small groups of teachers to a free-standing professional development program called the Walloon Institute. That professional development focused on Literature Circles, workshop approaches, and authentic assessment.

The remaining two districts, Tilton and Yardley, were located in Elmore Intermediate School District where two of the MELAF project leaders had worked. During the late '80s and early '90s, Sarah Plant served as a language arts consultant in the district and had run the Elmore Writing Project there. Participating teachers from all across the region had attended during the summers. In Tilton and Yardley, a few Writing Project participants had begun to advocate for literacy reform in their own districts. In Tilton, one teacher had assembled a small group of teachers across the district and asked if they were interested in forming a "whole language support group." They began meeting informally and eventually organized a series of after-school voluntary workshops on "Issues

in Literacy" in 1992. The following year, they asked the district to help them coordinate another series of after-school workshops for teachers. The central office was not willing to provide much in the way of funding or secretarial support, but they did allow teachers to go forward with the program. They contacted a local university and arranged for interested teachers to recieve continuing education credit for the participation.

Literacy reform in the fourth district, Yardley, was quite similar to Tilton's, though the organized initiative for literacy reform came from the district's curriculum coordinator rather than from a few committed teachers. In this district, the curriculum coordinator helped organized a group of elementary teachers to engage in "genre study." The following year the curriculum coordinator organized another professional development series called "Quality Issues in Literacy." Several district teachers also continued to participate in the Elmore Writing Project.

In all four districts, literacy reform did not begin with the superintendent, nor with a formal central office mandate. Common to all four districts were a few scattered individuals interested in literacy reform who fostered relationships with central office curriculum coordinators, administrators, and/or the superintendent. Their efforts began to take shape in local reform efforts, with small groups of teachers organizing to provide other teachers with on-going opportunities to learn about progressive literacy. In all four districts, a few teachers managed to hook up with outside networks, projects, and professional development opportunities. Given these relationships, ar-d percolating initiatives, the MELAF group chose these four sites to comprise their Demonstration Project.

Even before involvement with the state reform, all four districts exhibited features of what Spillane and Thompson (1997) identify as "high capacity." In "high capacity" districts, key personnel view their work as "teaching" reforms to teachers. They find ways to dynamically deploy human capital (such as expertise), social capital (such as trust, collaboration, and connections to networks) and financial resources in service of promoting teacher learning about reform. In all of the four MELAF sites, a few key players (principals, teachers, department chairs, or curriculum coordinators) viewed professional development as the heart of reform. Echoing important calls in the research literature (Little, 1993; Novick, 1996; Sykes, 1996) these locals felt that sustained teacher learning was necessary to spread innovative literacy practice, and they conceptualized their work as creating

opportunities for teacher learning. And when the MELAF reform came along, all four districts hooked up with the state project in ways that consolidated changes already underway.

That is not to say that MELAF project leaders believed that these districts uniformly exhibited exemplary practice across all teachers, schools, and grade levels. According to one project leader, no district was fully exemplary:

> we've tried to build on strength in the state, and what we were looking for is classrooms that we could videotape at each level, teachers who are relatively articulate, districts that had done relatively sane things, and when we were selecting those sites, it was really difficult to find places where you really did have any strength. And we, I wouldn't say that we do have actually anywhere in the state where you could go elementary, middle and high school, they're all equally strong, and you go, we've got real powerhouses. So kids aren't having experience anywhere in the state, I don't think, where they're having really good teaching in English language arts K-12.

Hence, the Demonstration Project wanted to develop these districts further, even while highlighting their current strengths. The Demonstration Project, as it evolved, took on these two inter-related functions: It sought to develop the four district s's capacity in English and language arts, and it intended to help the districts to "demonstrate" the standards to other districts.

Teachers from these districts were paid to meet together in two-week sessions over three summers. Each teacher was provided $100 per day of attendance and was reimbursed for mileage (distances between the districts and the summer institute location ranged from 30-150 miles). In addition, the groups met monthly during the school years between 1994 and 1996, sometimes as a whole group, and sometimes with only the teachers from their own district. The districts were paid money to cover the cost of substitute teachers when MELAF teachers were meeting together. Each district was assigned a "site facilitator" from the MELAF project, and in addition, a district coordinator who oversaw communication and logistics.

In both the summer and school year meetings, demonstration site teachers spent a lot of time learning about language arts, assessment, the content standards, and about what it might take to bring about curriculum change. In addition to deepening their own knowledge, they worked on developing ways that they might demonstrate the content standards to a wider audience. Standards-

based professional development was a core component of the Demonstration Project. Project leaders used the state content standards as a curriculum for teacher learning. The demonstration site leaders brought with them several assumptions about what meaningful teacher learning needed to include. Designing the MELAF summer institutes, Hooper and Plant incorporated and accelerated writing project approaches to professional development: learning by doing, facilitator modeling, community building, and developing teacher leadership. As Hooper stated:

> Sarah and I were given a chance to be facilitators in the MELAF summer institutes, so we tried to make those writing-project-like, but advanced .... I think that there are four or five things that writing projects do that are simple, unsurprising, but often not done. One of those things is... that the leaders have to do what they're saying. So writing project leaders write when it's time to write and read when it's time to read for the most part, and they put themselves close to the classrooms, not far far away. John Dewey said that we learn what we do, I think that's almost disturbingly true, we don't learn what we don't do. And so in the writing project, people write together and they share together and work on being a community of workshoppers together and so you learn so much more that way than you can by being, as you know, by being delivered a series of lectures or talks. So, it's the leader does, the group does, you become a study group together over the research and methods materials. You plan together, you don't just say now we've talked about these things, let's go do the best we can. But you explicitly plan together and finally, you also realize that the only way this is going to matter is if you become a community over time, not if you do summer camp and you all go back to your lives, but you become a community over time.

The MELAF professional development spanned three summers, each comprised of two non-consecutive week-long sessions, and participants also met together monthly during the school year. Each of the three summers had a particular emphasis: year one was the standards, year two focused on writing about the standards-based teaching practice, and year three emphasized assessment. Yet even with these particular emphases, several pedagogies and approaches cut across all three years. During all three years, participants engaged in sustained silent reading of articles and books -- about integrated literacy, multiculturalism, authentic assessment, and change processes for example. Participants heard presentations from outside experts, and from "inside experts," -- i.e. members of

the MELAF group who were doing notable things in their districts or classrooms. They borrowed books from the MELAF library and shared their reactions in book talks. And they wrote -- they wrote in reflective journals, they wrote reactions to readings, and they wrote and revised articles about their teaching practice. They "conferenced" their writing with other teachers in the group, and they asked for consultations from the facilitators. Engaging in writing, reading, speaking, and listening, MELAF teachers were sometimes grouped by district, sometimes grouped by grade-level across districts, and sometimes were grouped by the task at hand.

Though standards-based professional development was a central thrust of the Demonstration Project, it is not the focus of this analysis. Rather a few points related relative to the top-down and bottom-up intersections warrant mention. For one, the state content standards were not, by themselves, thought to be adequate to bring about change. MELAF project leaders took seriously calls for capacity building at the local level as a necessary means to reform. MELAF facilitators, however, specifically used the state standards as an opportunity to engage teachers in further learning. Teachers came from the grass roots, but they were not a random sample of teachers, for they had already exhibited prior involvement and commitment. Furthermore, several shared professional relationships with each other and with literacy reform associations (such as the Michigan Council of Teachers of English or the Framework project) . The occasion of MELAF consolidated and took advantage of these loosely coupled previous relationships and organizations. State level reform depended on and capitalized on grass roots activities.

But the relationship went both ways. Demonstration Project teachers went on to be very active themselves on behalf of the state standards. Predictably, they worked to change their own classroom teaching practice to make it reflect the state standards. More atypically, they took on public roles to promote the state standards. They carved out roles for themselves as change agents and literacy reformers, creating ways and means to spread the state English language arts standards. They created ways to work from the bottom up to promote a state level reform to other teachers in their school buildings, districts, and across the state.

Teachers as policy advocates: from the bottom up

During the last funded year of the Demonstration Project, and in the year following its conclusion, demonstration site participants worked in several ways to promote literacy reform, reaching out to the community, building-level colleagues, or teachers throughout the state.

To the state

Demonstration site teachers created several ways to "demonstrate" the standards to other educators state-wide in the form of published articles, conference presentations, consulting, site visitations, or in-services.

Site visits. In one district, Idlewilde, MELAF teachers wrote a brochure inviting teams of teachers from other districts to visit classrooms. As of 1997, the Idlewilde has hosted visits from 5 other districts. The district visits were carefully organized. The visiting team first meets with the district language arts coordinator and the district superintendent, both MELAF participants, who describe Idlewilde's efforts to implement the content standards, situating language arts reform in the context of wider school and district improvement efforts. The language arts coordinator "primes" (in her words) the visitors by explaining the principles underlying Idlewilde's approach to language arts. The visiting teachers then spend time in classrooms with MELAF teachers. They may visit the high school where two MELAF teachers developed videos on their use of reading and writing workshops (according to the high school teachers, the videos "took months to do.") The visitors may spend time in middle or elementary schools. They might page through books of teacher-developed materials and samples of student work. The classroom observations are followed by after-school debriefings where visitors and MELAF teachers talk. The districts immediately encircling Idlewilde have not expressed interest in visiting, but two Idlewilde teachers are continuing to consult with one district that came for a visit. Another district team has returned four times.

Conference presentations. Sixteen demonstration site teachers "facilitated" at the MELAF state-wide dissemination conference held in July of 1996 for 5-person teams from 40 districts. Facilitation involved organizing break-out sessions, liaising with invited districts during the meeting, and organizing discussion sessions. One of the Idlewilde teachers made a formal presentation at this conference to 60 elementary school teachers. As she describes it,

"it was a wonderful opportunity to share with people and to take them to the next step. So not only had MELAF taken us through all this, now we had to teach what we had learned and take them to the next step. And it's the way it ought to be. Because when you look at the learning pyramid, when do you learn the most, you retain 95% if you teach somebody else, and it was just the perfect blend," (Idlewilde language arts coordinator, p. 9).

A teacher from Tilton addressed the whole conference, showing how the state standards allowed her to analyze her teaching practice and improve.

MELAF teachers have presented at other conferences and sites as well. Some have presented to state conferences such as the Michigan Council of Teachers of English, the Michigan Reading Association, and the conferences sponsored by intermediate school districts. Others have presented at national conferences such as the International Reading Association, the National Journalism Education Association, the American Educational Research Association, and the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Meeting in Detroit in 1997. At this conference, two Tilton teachers served as conference "hosts"; two groups from Yardley presented on the state standards; 1 group from Norris presented; and Norris wrote a proposal to serve as a visitation site.

Published articles: Several MELAF teachers have published articles describing how they have changed their teaching. They describe key facets of the state content standards in light of changes they've made in their teaching. For example, three Idlewilde high school teachers wrote an article about changing classroom assessment; an elementary teacher described how he gradually incorporated reading workshop into his class; the then-Title I coordinator wrote about parent involvement programs stressing school literacy. Their articles have been published in the Literacy Consortium Journal, a publication focused on integrated literacy jointly comprised of the Michigan Association of Speech Communication (MASC), the Michigan Council of Teachers of English (MCTE), and the Michigan Reading Association (MRA).

The Literacy Consortium Journal, itself an arm of MELAF, has been mailed to approximately 7000 MCTE and MRA members throughout the state, and one might suppose that this audience consists mainly of educators. One of MELAF's adjunct goals was to build bridges between the state's professional organizations to mirror the bridges suggested by an integrated view of literacy. Just as integrated literacy suggests that reading and writing are complementary, so it made sense to foster

closer partnerships between the MCTE (more focused on the high school), the MRA (more focused on elementary reading), and MASC (with speech forensics often taught as a separate course or extra curricular removed from English or language arts class). In addition to publishing in that journal, one teacher has published two articles in Language Arts, a national publication of the NCTE. Two MELAF teachers have also had their writing published by the state, in the form of classroom vignettes describing the state standards.

Like with other forms of MELAF teacher leadership, it is difficult to gauge what kind of impact the articles have had. Five MELAF teachers have reported that they have ve received phone calls from other teachers across the state who had wanted to ask questions about issues described in the articles. Another teacher notes that publishing had a big impact on him personally, "it was a thrill, it really was. It was something big. Especially back in high school, I was not the world's greatest writer or even close. So I have come a long way to have something published by a state journal. ... it was a big thrill, a huge thrill." (p. 10, teacher #9). Another teacher notes that she submits non-education writing to magazines regularly, and still another mentions that she was invited to re-publish an article she had published elsewhere. In all of these cases, MELAF-related writing has occurred both under the direct umbrella of the project, in other unrelated venues. And while in a few cases, teachers were writing and publishing before the MELAF project (Hill published two in the early 1980's), about a third of theMELAF teachers have published articles during MELAF's tenure.

State-wide outreach has taken other forms. Idlewilde's superintendent is currently head of the state's superintendents association and in this capacity, has fostered a wide range of contacts. Two Tilton teachers have been certified by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards and have on-going connections to that organization. One of these teachers was sent to Washington D.C. by the National Board to present to the Business Round Table and talked about how Michigan's standards impacted her teaching. Several MELAF teachers have made presentations to the Michigan State Board of Education on behalf of the MELAF standards, while another teacher notes that she has written letters supporting the standards to state senators, local legislative representatives, and to members of the State Board of Education. Three MELAF teachers have long been involved in the state's English language arts professional organizations, while another teacher joined the NCTE as an outgrowth of her involvement in MELAF.

In reaching out to these broader audiences, MELAF teachers characterize themselves as "learners." They describe their changes as gradual and on-going. They do not view themselves as certified experts. They view "teaching" other teachers as an opportunity to learn themselves:

> I started talking about what I do. And I . . . . can substantiate what I am doing or what I am saying. So I probably presented 10 times since being part of MELAF. Without the MELAF background and without those people and those resources, it would have been next to impossible. If I was a 21 year old coming out of college and somebody told me in 10 years you are going to be giving presentations on a philosophy of education, namely integrated language arts, I would have said, no way. But here I am doing it," (5th grade teacher, p. 10).

To the community

Besides targeting a state-wide audience, several MELAF teachers have worked hard to get the word out to members of their local community. They have reached out to the local media and usearticles in local newspapers, another article by an Associated Press, local radio interviews, and in Tilton, several public-access cable television shows as evidence of a broader audience. Other Idlewilde teachers comment that the monthly district newsletter has featured stories on MELAF and that individual schools' newsletters often describe progressive language arts projects and practices. There was also a section on MELAF in one of the district's Annual Reports to the Community (a requirement of MI law PA 25, 1990).

In Tilton and Norris, MELAF teachers have, on at least 5 occasions, made presentations to their local school boards. But one of the most striking ways that Idlewilde MELAF teachers reached out to the local community was during the 1995 school board election. Two of the incumbent board members were being challenged by two newcomers who were hostile to progressive language arts. A core of MELAF teachers organized an ad-hoc political group and according to one teacher:

> we gathered community people together and we.... raised about $2000... and we had a small call-in campaign on the day of [the election]. We worked our hearts out and we overwhelmingly re-elected the people. We got 900 votes and typically there's the school board got a couple of hundred votes." (Idlewilde teacher #1, p. 14).

According to this teacher, the successful re-election of supportive school board members had an ancillary benefit: it persuaded the district superintendent, fully committed to MELAF, to stay in the

district. Furthermore, "The board members who were so antagonistic began to tone things down and kind of were petering out a little bit. And because they got a resounding message that this was not going to be acceptable."

In addition to their local political involvement, several MELAF teachers attended meetings of the Michigan State Board of Education. While no teachers were particularly sanguine about their impact on the then-Republican-dominated State Board, they nonetheless wrote letters and made presentations.

Other outreach to the community has occurred in more typical ways through parent involvement initiatives. In two districts, Idlewilde and Norris, MELAF teachers organized performances of student writing for parents, and "theme nights" where parents experienced the integrated literacy curriculum that students were experiencing in elementary schools.

In the building

Much of the district-level work on literacy reform has occurred in individual school buildings. Building-level advocacy is often significantly related to district priorities and hence it is difficult to tease out building-level change as distinct from district-level goals. Building-level outreach has been the hardest to document, largely because it has been on-going, spread across multiple contexts, and often embedded in other structures, committees, and initiatives. Further, some of the building-level outreach has been casual and ad hoc rather than formalized in presentations and programs. The following, then, is an accounting of what MELAF teachers say they have done at the building-level, but it is likely a partial inventory.

In several schools in all four districts, MELAF teachers started "study groups." In these study groups, interested participants have met weekly to talk about professional books and articles on literacy reform. One 8-person group, begun by a 2nd grade teacher, read Regie Routman's Invitations, (1994) and became so interested in her work that they read a later Routman book, Literacy at the Crossroads (1996) As the 2nd grade teacher put it,

> It wasn't enough that I was learning this, it was real important that I shared with my colleagues at school. And so I went in that summer and asked our principal if he would think about buying each teacher in the building the book. . . . [the group met to] ask questions

of each other and for all of us to take some risks in our classroom and then come back and meet every week to talk about it" (teacher #2, p. 4).

Notably, the group met on their own time on a voluntary basis and according to the teacher who started the group, "they asked to study another book." The district language arts coordinator has tried to initiate study groups at the other elementary schools in the district.

In addition to study groups focused on literacy reform, a MELAF high school teacher started a "teachers writing group." In Norris and Idlewilde, MELAF teachers have started school-wide "walking journals" where interested teachers write reflections on their classrooms -- sharing innovations, successes, and frustrations -- and pass along the journals to a colleague to write continuing, open-ended responses. The principal, in one Idlewilde building, participates in both of his school's journals, and has been writing in his own journal for six years as well. Their high school English department also began a "walking journal."

At the building level, several MELAF teachers mention that they have tried to "nudge," (in their words,) building-inservices, committee meetings, and staff meetings toward engagement with the standards. In Idlewilde, at the beginning of the 1995-96 school year, the MELAF group divided into four groups and each group made 30-minute presentations on the content standards at each building's August teacher orientation. A middle school teacher reported that they devoted one long English department meeting to studying the state standards and to discussing what they were already doing that reflected the state standards. This teacher was also co-chair of one of their school's committees working on renewing their North Central Accreditation: "I have exerted a heavy hand in that committee in attempting to connect what we are asking the other teachers to do with what I have learned through the MELAF project. The idea that writing is a means to understanding," (teacher #3, p. 4).

Another middle school teacher says that she has encouraged all the 6th grade teachers to enroll in summer institutes on reading workshop; 5 of the 7 grade-level teachers are also doing writers workshop (teacher #8). At the high school level, some English department meetings have been devoted to MELAF-related work. One high school teacher shared an analysis of her own practice cross-referenced to the state standards. But she also notes that department meetings were often taken up with administrative decisions such as "memo-type stuff and housekeeping," (teacher

#4, p. 21). Formal department meetings and committee meetings are one form of keeping MELAF on the agenda. The data show that much of the MELAF-related activity occurred in informal interactions as well.

In Tilton, Norris, and Yardley, several MELAF teachers have become high school English department chairs, or grade-level chairs at middle and elementary schools. Teachers in these districts have also had a very active role on accreditation committees and school-improvement committees. In these three districts, teachers have also presented to committees, sharing the state standards, and talking about changes they are making in their own classroom practice.

Informal interactions

Much of the building-level advocacy has occurred in the more formal occasions provided by committees and departments, but MELAF teachers report sharing their work in informal settings as well. One non-MELAF high school teacher explained that "It was like an English meeting sometimes at lunch," (non participant interview, #3). According to this teacher, MELAF teachers apparently bubbled over with enthusiasm: "Good teachers exchange good ideas. And when you hear one, you've got to try it, and so I did," as he referred to incorporating journal writing in his wood shop class. Another MELAF teacher talks about going jogging with a colleague who gradually became more interested in literacy reform. Other MELAF teachers mention that "teaming" with other teachers has provided a generative occasion for talking about literacy reform. Still other teachers report that they reach out to teachers from other subject areas to talk about ways to incorporate writing across the curriculum. Lastly, several teachers have reported that they have shared books, materials, and the state standards with "the teacher next door." In the interview data, there are many mentions of informal proximity providing occasions to share the state standards and collaborate with non-MELAF teachers.

As noted, these informal conversations are hard to track. They are by definition casual, but not unimportant. A great deal of research has shown that teachers generally do *not* talk about teaching with each other (Hargreaves, 1993; Kainan, 1995). School schedules that foreclose time for teachers to meet jointly are one significant cause; teachers' work is usually isolated and private. Teachers, in their fleeting informal contacts with each other, have been more likely to talk about students, logistics, and friendly non-school business than to talk about curriculum during lunch time.

In the district

Much of the MELAF advocacy work occurred within the district setting. Even outreach to other districts -- in particularly in hosting site visits -- was situated in the local context. Advocacy to the community, building-level study groups, sharing articles, chairing committees at the building level all overlapped within the wider context of the district itself. While parsing out distinct audiences and sites of outreach is one way to analyze the breadth of leadership activity, looking at the district as a whole provides another unit of analysis.

In Tilton, two MELAF teachers became involved with a district committee developing broad parameters for staff development and district curriculum development. Called a "Think Tank," this committee eventually spawned a "Curriculum Development Team" that outlined district positions on equity and excellence, professional development, and guidelines for creating subject-matter curriculum teams. Another MELAF teacher was involved in a district-sponsored "High School Redesign Team" that drafted a proposal calling for curriculum standards, authentic assessment, and on-going professional development. Other Tilton MELAF teachers wrote a $40,000 proposal to the district to provide 50 district teachers with literacy professional development during the 1996-97 school year. Funding the Tilton English Language Arts Team (TELAT) proposal, the district hired Plant and Hooper to provide 10 full-day sessions to an expanded pool of Tilton teachers. Other Tilton teachers tried to organize district department chairs at the 7-12th grade levels to meet to align English curriculum. This initiative was not sponsored by the district, and it was eventually de-railed: Lacking a contract for two years, several Tilton non-MELAF teachers felt that additional initiatives beyond their contracted schedules were not appropriate. However, the district English language arts curriculum effort is proceeding out of the central office in the 1997-98 school year and includes several MELAF teachers as well as TELAT teachers.

In Yardley, MELAF teachers continued to play a very active role on the district's Language Arts Committee. They re-wrote the state curriculum, and in partnership with other teachers in the district, wrote thematic units based on the curriculum standards. Over a two-year period, these teachers were provided with significant release time to develop and refine thematic units such as "The American Dream" and "Personal Responsibility."

In Norris, the Language Arts Committee has been increasingly active in purchasing new literacy materials and developing the district's curriculum. The Language Arts Committee worked closely with a district assessment committee and both wrote formal district policies stressing integrated literacy and authentic assessment. As in Yardley and Idlewilde, Norris's Language Arts Committee includes several teachers who did not participate in the MELAF Demonstration Project. District literacy reform is not fully contingent on the MELAF group, but those teachers have played very active roles as change agents and sources of information. Norris has also continued to fund school-year reading workshop professional development for additional teachers.

In Idlewilde, the smallest of the four districts, MELAF teachers have worked to revamp its school schedules to facilitate both teacher collaboration and workshop-based instruction. At the high school, they lobbied to implement block scheduling to provide extended time for in-class workshop approaches, intending as well to reduce some teachers' reliance on lecture and drill. At the middle school and elementary schools, the district has moved toward a "related arts" schedule where gym class, art, and music are offered at similar times so that regular teachers will have access to joint planning time. Further, the middle school has planned to move to a "team structure" during the 1997-98 school year, where small groups of teachers will work together and share the same 100 students for the year.

While these kinds of structural changes are gaining popularity across the country, they are, by themselves, no panacea. As Elmore shows (1995), structural changes are not necessarily likely to produce curriculum change. Changing a daily schedule will not, by itself, induce all teachers to teach in a more active, innovative fashion. Joint planning times will not, by themselves, induce teachers to develop collaborative thematic units. But in Idlewilde, these structural changes were initiated in light of curriculum changes already underway. As the district continued to consolidate literacy reforms, they worked to change other district policies and practice to support literacy reform.

Along with structural changes, the district formalized policies for changing curriculum and assessment. The Idlewilde MELAF group became involved in district committees designed to strengthen and consolidate literacy reform. In particular, the MELAF teachers served on a district-level language arts committee. Whereas the district curriculum used to "copy the scope and sequence charts from the textbooks," they now have developed their own writers workshop curriculum and

have started a Portfolio Committee to explore changing the district's assessment practices. The district has also continued to fund on-going summer professional development in readers and writers workshops.

Across all four districts, MELAF teacher activism on behalf of the state standards often occurred in committee settings. MELAF teachers were active in several other arenas, but the district was an important site of activity. However, at the district level, MELAF teachers were only one source of pressure on districts. Pressure coming from the state -- in the form of state assessments and the required core curriculum response -- created a highly receptive contexts for their district-level efforts. Teachers in all of these districts had been active in trying to promote literacy reform before 1993, but with state legitimation and pressure, districts had additional reasons to respond to their efforts. Elmore (1997) asserts that there is "little evidence that districts have played a constructive role in instructional improvement in the past," (p.1). Though perhaps atypical, the four demonstration districts responded to local and state pressures to place curriculum change on the agenda.

In the case of districts, then, top-down and bottom-up change efforts intersected directly. Districts drew on local change agents to guide their responses to state-level reforms. But teachers found a much more receptive audience for their efforts given the pressures of state policy. Districts and schools were only one of the many audiences for teacher activism, but teachers' efforts in their own districts were powerfully bolstered by similar messages coming from the top of the system.

We do not suggest that within these districts literacy reform proceeded swiftly or evenly. As one Idlewilde teacher noted "We are not Utopia." Their superintendent commented:

> "I see us on a continuum. I don't think that there is a point out there that we can say, 'well we are going to reach this and this is where we want to be.' I think it is a continuous journey. The good news is you can start it any time. The bad news is that it never ends," (p. 12)."

In all four districts, the majority of teachers were not actively involved in literacy reform. Rather, all of these districts employ some proportion of resistant, indifferent, or committed teachers. All of these districts operate within typical organizational constraints: limited funding, teacher isolation, competing priorities, and organizational structures that impede collaboration. Yet even within typical constraints, MELAF teachers found ways to re-organize district policy to promote continued

literacy change. Though structures can be deterministic, individual and collective agency can create opportunities for flexible changes.

The preceding inventory of teacher leadership highlights the arenas in which outreach occurred: state, district, building, and community, for example. Teacher leadership was spread across multiple audiences and sites. The MELAF teachers' activity certainly suggests breadth, and it also suggests that participants wanted to reach out to several constituencies. Again, given that the educational enterprise is nested within a complex web of institutions and stakeholders, there is much to be said for breadth. Given the loosely coupled nature of the educational system where multiple points of influence diffuse planned change, a multi-pronged approach partially impacted several significant arenas.

In reaching out to different constituencies MELAF teachers did not set forth a master strategy. Their efforts were invented as ideas and needs arose. When a school board election threatened literacy reform, several teachers responded with leadership. When enthusiasm for literacy reform bubbled over during lunch times, MELAF teachers shared ideas and resources. And at other times, MELAF teachers invented strategies to share their work with other districts and made decisions to chair district committees. Decisions about how and where to initiate leadership roles were made in response to multiple contexts and the perceived needs within those contexts. Exactly how the leadership impacted different audiences is a pressing, and to some extent unanswerable question. Our data reveal certain demonstrable responses -- telephone calls, district policy decisions, principals purchasing study-group books. But our data do not reveal long-term responses to the responses.

In one way, however, it is possible to determine what MELAF teachers viewed as their "message." They viewed literacy reform as an opportunity to learn and sought to create opportunities to "teach" others about how to increase their learning. They viewed reform as contingent on the kinds of professional development they themselves had experienced. They sought to provide multiple opportunities for their colleagues to learn along aside them. They did not view literacy reform as a definitive end, nor as a discrete set of instructional behaviors. They did not assume that change would follow from one inspirational speaker or one committee's policy decisions.

Rather they viewed themselves as engaged in on-going learning as reform. They stressed the journey and the process over a pre-determined destination. As one teacher put it,

> In order to make change, you need to constantly give, you can't force people to do something. You need to give them invitations in to make a difference. Continual invitations and nudges to keep moving in that direction. And our district does that through inservice. Through opportunities to take classes and reading and writing workshops and summers. We offer them during the school year, so that people will if they don't take summer, they have during the year, that there's constant opportunities for them to learn and to grow" (teacher #1, p. 20).

Implications

There are several ways to think about the implications of this single case study. As a single case study, there are of course many context-specific parameters that limit its generalizability. MELAF was an expensive proposition, funded with a $1.6 million grant from the federal government. Further, it was bounded in time. Lastly, it offered expensive, high quality professional development that was distinctly more sustained than is typical. Certainly, the policy literature is replete with examples of successful special projects that fizzle when funding dries up. Further, the MELAF project did not target a random group of teachers and districts from the local level. Rather, they chose teachers and districts where reform was underway.

MELAF built on reforms and ideas well underway, locally and nationally. Its impact needs to be viewed in light of longer term reforms. But MELAF did provide a particular sort of legitimacy and focus to these ideas. It did offer resources, structures, and incentives that did not exist prior to 1993. MELAF may have been part of a larger stream of reform, but it was a significant tributary. As a funded entity, it provided resources specifically for capacity building at the grass roots level. This case study shows what intensive capacity-building looked like and what kinds of teacher leadership occurred under its umbrella. In addition to providing intensive work with a relatively small group of teachers and districts, however, the MELAF project worked in wider arenas as well. The standards were sent to every school district in the state. The project organized a dissemination conference and went wide as well as deep. The standards were to undergird the state's assessments, and in Michigan, as elsewhere, state tests have exerted significant pressure on districts who in turn exert

pressure on principals and teachers. Districts all across the state are concerned with performing well on the assessments, and many local districts have attended to the standards as a result. The standards are official state policy and for that reason, carry added weight.

MELAF, then, was both a formal state policy emanating from the top of the system, and an effort to consolidate and accelerate changes percolating at the grass roots level. MELAF provided standards that made sense to many teachers at the local level; these teachers in turn helped to advocate for the state policy. MELAF provides a generative case study of how change can intersect at differing levels of the educational system. It shows how policy can build on on-going change yet can accelerate it within a particular time frame and organizational scope. Research reveals that top-down change is often subverted, ignored, or diffused at the local level. Yet local change by itself generally remains local and isolated. MELAF offers an interesting illustration of change bottom-up and top-down change intersecting in complex ways. In particular, it shows how teachers managed to penetrate the loose couplings across the system.

One simple way to view MELAF is a case of groups -- teachers, policymakers, curriculum coordinators, subject matter organizations -- figuring out how to get what they want. Prior to MELAF, teachers found colleagues who shared their commitments and beliefs. Together, small groups of teachers strategized about how to create desired changes in their schools and districts. Policymakers found teachers and locals who shared their commitments. MELAF provided significant resources to strengthen and legitimate their efforts. After participating in MELAF, these teachers were consolidated into a loose network and they knew more about how to get what they wanted. Since teachers cannot, even if they wished to, bring about change by fiat, they worked to join committees, shared readings with administrators, wrote articles, enlisted parents, and extended multiple "invitations" to other teachers to join in literacy reform. They formed associations and in doing so, created ways to bring about change.

In the context of a democracy, the teachers' story is not surprising. Individuals form associations, associations form coalitions, and interest groups work within democratic processes to bring about change. In democracies, there is a resounding din of interest groups -- Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Texas Cattleman's Association, Thalidomide Victims of Canada, the American Educational Research Association -- each committed to its self-interested agendas and priorities. As

Garrison Keillor notes, democracy consists of "The National Federation of American Coalitions, Associations and Organizations." Given democracy's defining commitments to freedom of association and free speech, these groups find ways to bring about change within a permeable system.

With the educational enterprise firmly situated at the center of U.S. democracy, schools too have been the sites of interest group change efforts. From desegregation policy to book banning crusades, schools have changed in response to interest group pressure and democratic actions (Gutmann, 1987). The educational system, though bureaucratic and thus conservative, nonetheless has changed in countless ways according to the desires of organized constituencies (Cusick, 1992).

The story of the MELAF, then, is in many ways of classic story of groups coming together with common interests to find ways to bring about change. What is surprising about the MELAF story, however, is that it is comprised of teachers associated around curriculum change who sought to change other teachers and their schools and districts. It is also noteworthy that the groups came from different levels of the system. At the inception of U.S. public schooling, teachers were at the bottom of the educational hierarchy with little formal authority over any aspect of their working lives (Tyack, 1974). Later research documented that teachers, in fact, exerted considerable informal discretion over their own individual working lives though they still remained at the bottom of the formal hierarchical decision making structure (Cuban, 1993). In the 1960's teachers' unions were granted the right over collective bargaining which represented a watershed moment in teacher empowerment. Through union affiliation, teachers were constituted into an association that exerted influence on their behalf. Similarly, national subject matter organizations -- the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the International Reading Association, for example -- provided another venue for teachers to come together to express common interests. Unions and subject matter associations represent the two most significant ways that teachers have come together collectively. Yet unions focus on contract issues and subject matter organizations exist at a considerable remove from local schools. The case of MELAF offers local examples of teachers associating to bring about curriculum change in their buildings, district, and in their state.

Several factors facilitated teachers' efforts to bring about change: meaningful professional development; federal funding; state legislation and state assessments; supportive administrators;

similar messages echoed in the NCTE and IRA; similar messages espoused by national standards reformers (Olson, 1995); and most significantly, perhaps, the power of the literacy reforms themselves. The literacy reforms *felt* powerful and meaningful to many of the teachers who began to learn about them and experiment with them, fueling their commitment to share "best practice."

So MELAF offers case-specific parameters that will not necessarily generalize to other interest-group reforms. But the fact remains that MELAF teachers created many ways to work within the loosely-coupled educational system to bring about what they wanted. Teachers found ways to be change agents and not just the passive targets of policy. State reformers carefully drew on teacher commitments and galvanized them beyond local efforts. This, perhaps, is one of the most striking features of the MELAF effort. MELAF shows how state-level reformers might include locals to foster reform partnerships that spread to broader audiences. In this case, state reformers drew on locals to help develop the standards, and they drew on local districts to enact the standards. Within a loosely coupled educational system, large-scale rational change generally fails to penetrate across levels of the system. Similarly, innovations take hold with horrible alacrity at one level of the system, and bandwagon fads result. The system responds to change, but it is generally transitory, superficial change isolated in pockets of the loosely coupled system.

MELAF offers a counter example. It shows that the loose coupling allows, in fact, for loose coupling. Elastic associations across levels of the system are formed and begin to coalesce in change. But these elastic associations do not materialize from no where. Shulman (1983) suggest that loose coupling is adaptive, but he does not specify who or what does the adapting. Rather than viewing loose coupling as resulting in a functionally adaptive system, this current case shows how top-down and bottom-up intersections emerged from active, strategic partnerships. In the case of MELAF, teachers affiliated around their deep commitments to a vision of literacy. Their affiliations arose from state-level reforms that fostered system-wide change. The system remains permeable and literacy reform likely remains uneven. Yet this effort continues to proceed from multiple levels within the system. These dynamic partnerships offer a generative strategy for reform.

Appendix 1

Data Collection and Method

Data on the Michigan English Language Arts Frameworks Project (MELAF) have been collected over a four-year period from 1993-1997 using qualitative field methods, primarily observation, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. The research has documented several phases of the standards project: standards' development; contentious political review; the policy context; state-wide dissemination; state-level assessment; and district-level change efforts in four school districts. The data from which this paper is drawn include the following: observation of three years of state-sponsored professional development; interviews with project participants and district informants; and document review, including district policies, district history, and published articles by project participants. Districts and participants have been assigned pseudonyms.

During the first two years of the MELAF project, data collection involved observing Grade Level Task Force meetings, MELAF management team meetings, and State Board of Education Meetings (see Cusick, Wixson, & Borman, 1997). In addition, data collection involved document analysis of the considerable paper trail left by these Task Forces and working groups. For example, as Grade Level Task Forces were drafting the standards, they kept meeting minutes and proposed revisions. When the draft standards were sent out to the state for field review, the state kept a record of comments, survey results, and proposed revisions. Analysis of data from this phase of collection involved analyzing the vision of literacy expressed in the draft standards and mapping it onto other sources of published literacy reform. Further, the researchers tracked the state-level debate about the English language arts standards and the policy initiatives that bounded it.

For the Demonstration Project phase of the research, data collection involved observation of two of the three years of professional development activity. Data on the MELAF professional development were drawn from first-hand observations of the summer institutes, though not the monthly meeting held during the school year. The researchers observed the professional development sessions, read the articles participants were given, and sat in on small group writing conferences. After observing the summer institute sessions, the researchers wrote field notes and vignettes. During and after observing the MELAF professional development, the four project leaders and facilitators were interviewed about their goals for the Demonstration Project, and were asked

about their views about how it was unfolding. Agendas and written materials related to MELAF professional development were also collected.

In analyzing the professional development, we looked at both its pedagogical structures and its content. We analyzed how much time was devoted to the following categories: standards-related work; writing; reading; assessment; curriculum; and district-level planning. Many of these categories were overlapping. For example, participants would write about their own curriculum *vis a vis* the state content standards. Despite the blended categories, our analysis was able to account for how time was spent and by cross-referencing this analysis to the interviews, we were able to discern the scope, goals, and activities of the professional development.

In addition to analyzing the professional development, data were collected on the individual participants and on the four demonstration districts. Two-thirds of the MELAF participants were interviewed using the following kinds of prompts: What is your professional background? What was the MELAF professional development like for you? What did you find valuable? Were there any tensions or problems for you? How has MELAF impacted your district? What kinds of things have you done with the standards in your building, district, or across the state? From these interviews, we tallied responses by individual teacher, creating abbreviated portraits of each teacher's background in language arts and each teacher's outreach on behalf of English language arts reform. We also collected data, where available, on exactly what teachers had done: we read and collected their writing; we sought out committee meeting agendas; we attended conference presentations when possible. We also verified individual reports against other tangible evidence of teacher activity, cross-checking for accuracy. In addition to analyzing data on every MELAF participant, three additional interviews were conducted: one group interview with three non-MELAF participants; one interview with a non-MELAF principal; and one focus group interview with a group of MELAF participants.

After compiling individual teacher activism by teacher, we then tracked district-level policies related, in whatever way, to language arts reforms both during and after MELAF. These district-level case studies situated individual teacher activity, and provided a site from which to analyze the spread of change at one organizational level of the educational system.

In analyzing both district-level and teacher-level responses to the MELAF reforms, we tracked what was specifically done. We looked at both formal activity -- such as committee work,

and residue of informal activity, such as reports of lunch-room discussions. However, there were some complexities to the analysis. For one, much of the work has been collaborative rather than individual. Our initial analysis by individual teacher was inadequate since so much work had been shared and collective. For example, an analysis of one individual teacher revealed that she had published two articles, chaired a committee, and presented at a conference. However, one article was co-authored, and the conference presentation included other district teachers. Hence by arraying activity by individual teacher, there were several "double counts" of activity. Six teachers, for example, presented together at two conferences. While the collaboration made discrete accounts difficult, it was a revealing finding. Joint activity, collaboration, and shared advocacy were at the heart of the story. However given this collaborative overlap, we then analyzed the outreach by system-level activity rather than by individual teacher. We inventoried what had been done where, and then accounted for numbers of teachers participating in each type of event.

Later analysis looked at the implications of teacher advocacy on behalf of state policy. Surprised by the level of grass-roots activity we saw, we then looked at the data to trace other arenas in which top-down and bottom-up intersections occurred. Measuring what had transpired against the discourse of systemic reform, we noted several areas where the "system" was more dynamic and adaptive than we might have suspected. In qualitative research, theories often follow rather than precede empirical observation. In this case, theorizing about the system-wide implications of this reform was only one of several possible threads we might have pursued. The data speak to other plausible implications: about high capacity districts; about incremental versus mandated change; about the relationship between professional development and teacher leadership; or about literacy reform as a subject matter. In other work, we have analyzed our findings in light of these sorts of implications. In this paper, we do not claim that top-down and bottom-up intersections are the only theoretical frame that accounts for what we observed. Rather, we suggest that a system-wide analysis reveals larger patterns across related events.

Appendix 2
The Michigan English Language Arts Content Standards

In grades K-12, the English language arts standards will ensure that all students have opportunities to engage successfully in discovering, creating, and analyzing spoken, written, electronic, and visual texts which reflect multiple perspectives and diverse communities. All students will

1. Meaning and Communication
read and comprehend general and technical material;

demonstrate the ability to write clear and grammatically correct sentences, paragraphs, and compositions;

focus on meaning and communication as they listen, speak, view, read, and write in personal, social, occupational, and civic contexts;

2. Language
use the English language effectively, in formal situations within schools, communities, and workplaces by building upon an understanding of their own and other language patterns;

3. Literature
interact with a wide variety of classic and contemporary literature and other texts to seek information, ideas, enjoyment, and understanding, of their individuality, our common humanity, and the rich diversity in our society;

4. Voice
view themselves as effective speakers and writers and demonstrate their expressive abilities by creating oral, written, and visual texts that engage their audience;

5. Skills and Processes
demonstrate, monitor, and reflect upon the skills and processes used to communicate through listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing;

6. Genre and Craft of Languages
explore and use the characteristics of different types of texts, aesthetic elements, and mechanics—including text structure, figurative and descriptive language, spelling, punctuation, and grammar—to construct and convey meaning;

7. Depth of Understanding
demonstrate understanding of the complexity of enduring issues and recurring problems by making connections and generating themes within and across texts;

8. Ideas in Action
apply knowledge, ideas, and issues drawn from texts to their lives and the lives of others;

9. Inquiry and Research
define and investigate important issues and problems using a variety of resources, including technology, to explore and create texts;

10 Critical standards
develop and apply personal, shared, and academic criteria for the enjoyment, appreciation, and evaluation of their own and others' oral, written, and visual texts.

Appendix 3
THE FOUR DEMONSTRATION DISTRICTS

Source: Michigan State Department of Education Web site (http://www.mde.state.mi.us/). Table compile by, and some numbers rounded by, Jennifer Borman

	Idlewilde	Norris	Tilton	Yardley
Total persons	14,000 (97% White)	46,000 (95% White)	74,000	72,000 (95% White)
Area of district in square km's	170 sq. km's	199 sq. km's		89 sq. km's.
median household income	$24,500	$30,500	$41,000	$40,000
median housing value	$43,000	$68,000	$85,000	$78,000
% children in poverty	16%	17%	7%	7%
Urban/rural status	8,000 Urban outside urbanized areas; 253 rural farm; 6,000 rural non-farm.	32,000 Urban outside urbanized area; 411 rural farm; 14,000 rural non-farm.	74,000 urban inside urbanized area	72,000 inside urbanized area.
% children by race in public schools	97% White; .5% Black; 1% Hispanic; .5% Asian/Pacific Islander	94% White; 4% Black; 1% Hispanic; 1% Asian/Pacific Islander	47% White; 50% Black; .5 % Hispanic; 2% Asian/Pacific Islander	96% White; 1.5% Black; 1.5% Hispanic; 1% Asian/Pacific Islander
Per pupil expenditure	$4,014	$4,406	$8,366	$5,858
% students eligible for free lunch	19%	17%	8%	8%
Number of schools	6 (5 regular; 1 special education).	13 (13 regular)	16 (16 regular)	30 (23 reg. schools; 6 special ed.; 1 other/alternative school)
% schools urban/rural	100% schools small town	100% schools small town	100% urban fringe of a lg. city	60% mid-size central city; 40% urban fringe of a lg. city.
Number of teachers	161	513	809	850
1994-95 Avg. teacher salary & state salary rank	$48,084 114th	$47,287 131st	$59,870 9th	$53,759 34th

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